

Message Text

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SUBJECT: OPERATION SHABA - U.S. PRESS REACTION

1. FOLLOWING IS ROUND-UP OF MAJOR STORIES APPEARING
IN THE U.S. PRESS MARCH 17 CONCERNING ZAIRE.

A. -- THE WASHINGTON POST REPORTED THAT SECRETARY
VANCE, IN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS COMMITTEE, SAID THAT THE "KATANGA GENDARMES
COULD POSE A DANGEROUS SITUATION FOR (ZAIRE'S)
STABILITY, IF THEY THREATENED ZAIRE'S COPPER MINING BELT.
HE ALSO SAID THAT THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF THE COST OF THE
EQUIPMENT BEING AIRLIFTED BY THE U.S. IS "LESS THAN
2 MILLION DOLLARS." THIS IS DOUBLE THE FIGURE GIVEN
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THE DAY BEFORE BY THE SPOKESMAN. REP. BONKER EXPRESSED
SERIOUS CONCERN.

B.-- BERNARD GWERTZMAN REPORTS ON THE SECRETARY'S
APPEARANCE YESTERDAY ON THE HILL AND HIS STATEMENTS
REGARDING ZAIRE.

-- IN AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED, "THINK FIRST, FLY LATER",
THE TIMES WARNS THE ADMINISTRATION AGAINST IMITATING
PAST CRISIS ACTION IN THE CASE OF ZAIRE, WITHOUT JUSTIFYING
THE RUSH.

C. -- IN THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, DANIEL
SUTHERLAND WRITES FROM WASHINGTON OF THE U.S. RESPONSE
TO MOBUTU'S APPEAL FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HE STRESSES
THE GENERAL UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE MILITARY SITUATION
TO WHICH WE ARE RESPONDING IN A "KNEE JERK" FASHION. A
CONGRESSIONAL SPECIALIST IS QUOTED, "NO ONE KNOWS
WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT, WE'RE TRYING TO GET A
CLEAR PICTURE AS TO JUST WHAT IT IS WE'RE RESPONDING
TO." IN CONCLUSION HE NOTES THAT ZAIRE IS A COUNTRY
IN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE RESTRICTED.

D. -- IN THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR AN EDITORIAL
PAGE CARTOON SHOWS A U.S. SUPPLY TRUCK LABELED
"POST-VIETNAM U.S., AID, FOOD, TOOLS, MEDICAL
EQUIPMENT. IN THE FOREGROUND A ZAIRIAN OFFICER WITH A
CATAPULT IS ABOUT TO LAUNCH A LOAF OF BREAD, THE
CAPTION READS "HERE THEY COME...GIVE THEM A BLAST OF
CHEESE ON DARK RYE."

E. -- HENRY L. TREWHITT WRITES FOR THE BALTIMORE SUN THAT
THE SECRETARY IDENTIFIED THE ENTRUDERS IN ZAIRE AS
"PRIMARILY ZAIRIAN REBELS BASED IN NEIGHBORING ANGOLA."
HE SAID THERE WAS NO "HARD EVIDENCE" THAT THEY WERE
LED BY CUBANS.

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2. EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE WASHINGTON POST MARCH 16
ENTITLED "WHY ZAIRE?" TEXT FOLLOWS: QTE TRUE, ZAIRE IS ONE
OF AFRICA'S LARGEST AND MOST POPULOUS AND RELATIVELY MOST
MODERATE STATES AND IT'S BEEN MORE FRIENDLY THAN NOT TO
AMERICAN POLITICAN AND ECONOMIC INTEREST FOR NEARLY TWO
DECADES. TRUE, IT DEEPENED ITS CLAIM ON WASHINGTON BY
LENDING ITSELF TO THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION'S
SECRET INVOLVEMENT, ABORTED WHEN REVEALED, IN THE ANGOLAN
CIVIL WAR. TRUE (OR SO IT APPEARS) IT'S IN SOME
TROUBLE AT THE MOMENT NOW THAT ANGOLA, TASTING REVENGE,
SEEMS TO BE SPONSORING ATTACKS ON THE OLD KATANGA PART
OF ZAIRE (THE FORMER CONGO) BY SEPARATIST-MINDED
KATANGESE. AND, TRUE, IT'S BETTER THAN THE NEW
ADMINISTRATION SHOULD SEND EMERGENCY MILITARY AID
OPENLY RATHER THAN AGAIN GO DOWN THE CIA PATH. TWO

PLANELOADS OF MILITARY GEAR WERE DISPATCHED YESTERDAY.

IT'S STILL A HIGHLY DUBIOUS PROPOSITION FOR THE UNITED STATES TO DEEPEN ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE MURK OF ZAIRE IN THE WAY THAT IT HAS. PRESIDENT MOBUTU IS NOT EXACTLY WHAT YOU'LL CALL JIMMY CARTER'S TYPE OF FOREIGN LEADER. HE RUNS A CRUDE POLICE STATE OF WHICH THE STATE DEPT LOOKING FOR A SILVER LINING, HAS JUST SAID IN ITS HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT, "GENERALLY, HOWEVER, AFTER INTERROGATION NON-POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO REPEATED BEATINGS." THE UNITED STATES PROFESSES NOT TO KNOW WHAT KIND OF SOUP ZAIRE IS REALLY IN, WHETHER CUBANS ARE TRAINING THE ANGOLAN MERCENARIES, OR FINANCING THEM, OR MERELY OFFERING MORAL SUPPORT; OR WHETHER THE EMERGENCY AMERICAN MILITARY AID THUS FAR SENT OR CONTEMPLATED WILL DO ITS INTENDED JOB. THERE IS AN OPEN-MINDED QUALITY TO ZAIRE'S PREDICAMENT - ITS LONG-DEVELOPING ECONOMIC PREDICAMENT AS WELL AS ITS NEWLY DEVELOPING POLITICAL ONE -AND IT RAISES THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUESTION OF WHETHER ZAIRE IS FOR THE UNITED STATES STILL A GOOT BET. WE HAVE HAD UNHAPPY EXPERIENCES WITH OPEN-ENDED INVOLVEMENTS OF WHICH VIETNAM, OF COURSE, IS EXHIBIT A.

THE LARGER ISSUE IS HOW THE UNITED STATES INTENDS TO TREAT THE DISPUTES AMONG BLACK STATES WHICH ARE ENDEMIC ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. THIS IS THE FIRST ONE TO EXPLODE SINCE JIMMY CARTER BECAME PRESIDENT - INDEED, IT IS THE FIRST FOREIGN MILITARY CONFLICT OF ANY KIND IN WHICH HE HAS INVOLVED THE UNITED STATES - AND PEOPLE ARE NATURALLY LOOKING AT HIS POLICY FOR WHAT PRECEDENTS IT MAY HOLD. WE FIND HIS APPROACH TROUBLING. HE HAS NOT EXPLAINED THE CONTINGENCIES OR STAKES WHICH REQUIRE SUCH AN ABRUPT AMERICAN RESPONSE NOR THE RISKS OF DELAY. HE HAS NOT INDICATED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS MOVING BY DIPLOMATIC MEANS, SAY, BY APPEALING TO THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY OR EVEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS, TO SEEK A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE. HE CAME TO THE WHITE HOUSE PROMISING TO SHOULDER MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR AFRICA'S AND THE DEVELOPING WORLD'S ECONOMIC WELFARE. IT IS ODD TO SEE HIM REACTING TO HIS FIRST CHALLENGE IN THE PATTERN OF THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION: HUSTLING MORE SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO A LONGTIME CLIENT STATE WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE UNDER CUBAN GUNS. WHY DOESN'T MR. CARTER SLOW DOWN AND SAY WHAT HIS POLICY IS AND SAY WHAT IS POLICY IS AND WHERE HE THINKS IT WILL FETCH US UP.

3.THE NEW YORK TIMES PUBLISHED AN EDITORIAL MAR 17

3. THE NEW ;NEW YORK TIMES PUBLISH-D AN EDITORIAL MARCH 17
ENTITLED "THINK FIRST FLY LATER"
TEXT FOLLOWS:

"ZAIRE IS NO LONGER THE CONGO AND THE UNITED STATES
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IS NO LONGER LOOKING FOR "NATION-BUILDING" ADVENTURES
ABROAD. SO THE URGENT AIRLIFT OF ABOUT \$2 MILLION
WORTH OF NON-LETHAL MILITARY SUPPLIES TO THE REGIME
OF PRESIDENT MOBUTU IS NOT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW
VIETNAM. CONSIDERING THE PAST MILITARY AID TO ZAIRES,
IT ISN'T EVEN MUCH OF AN ADDED COMMITMENT. BUT IT
IS A REFLEX RESPONSE THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN CHECKED
IN RECOGNITION OF THE SYMBOLISM THAT SUCH AN ACTION
CAN ACQUIRE OVERSEAS AND AT HOME. THE OFFICIALS WHO
RUSHED TO HELP MR. MOBUTU DEAL WITH A BORDER INCURSION
WANT HIS CONTINUED GRATITUDE AND VOTES IN INTERNATIONAL
COUNCILS. BUT THE FUTURE AMERICAN POLICY IN AFRICA
WILL BE TO SEEK SUCH SUPPORT EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH
ECONOMIC LINKS WITH THE NATIONS OF THAT CONTINENT.
IT WILL WORK BEST IF WE DESIST FROM MILITARY AND POLITICAL
MANEUVERS IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THE BEST WAY TO
MARK TIME WHILE DEFINING A NEW POLICY IS TO MARK TIME.
THE WORST WAY IS TO IMITATE PAST CRISIS ACTION WITHOUT
JUSTIFYING THE RUSH.
VANCE

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